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RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1738  
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0721  
RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 6529  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2894  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 9062  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 001123

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SUBJECT: ALGERIAN WESTERN SAHARA POSITION UNYIELDING

Classified By: Ambassador David D. Pearce; reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) During an October 8 introductory meeting with the Ambassador, Minister Delegate for Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel (U/S equivalent) asserted that Algeria's position on Western Sahara has not changed since 1965 and that Algeria continued to believe that the principle of self-determination must be applied to give the Sahrawis the right to choose their future freely. He said Morocco's view on Western Sahara has changed several times and regretted that at present the Moroccans do not view the Sahrawis as equal partners, a position that Algeria does not accept. "Even if we are the last country in the world to hold this position, we will hold fast," he added. The Ambassador told Messahel that Western Sahara was discussed at length during the Secretary's visit in September and underscored her message that it was time to make serious efforts toward achieving a mutually agreeable resolution of the conflict.

¶2. (C) Messahel acknowledged U.S. interest in seeing improvements in Algeria's bilateral relationship with Morocco, particularly the opening of the border, and urged the U.S. to push Morocco to make concessions. Messahel assured the Ambassador that Algeria did not oppose cooperation with Morocco, but progress on Maghreb integration was contingent on finding a solution to Western Sahara. That said, Messahel noted meetings with Morocco on integration and bilateral cooperation on issues like counter-terrorism will continue. The Ambassador said that the U.S. has made several efforts to support the UN process and reminded Messahel that all parties involved in the negotiations need to make an effort to reach an agreement, which means that neither side will likely receive its first-choice option.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Messahel is the MFA's hard-core keeper of the flame on Western Sahara. His comments repeated Algeria's longstanding position that the right of self-determination should be the guiding principle for a resolution on Western Sahara. His remark linking improved bilateral relations with Morocco to progress on Western Sahara also echoes what we heard from President Bouteflika during the Secretary's recent visit.

PEARCE